1476. c. 15

THE WIG.

A Burlesque-Satirical POEM.

By the AUTHOR of MORE FUN.

—Pulchrum est digito monstrari, et dicier—Ille est.

HOR.

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MDCC LXV.

THE WIG.

VARIOUS the ways, which bards have trod before,
And ſpoil'd ſo much, that I can ſpoil no more.
Some crop the paſture of the verdant plain,
Where ſheep ſo oft have fed, but fed in vain.
Some, wrapt in contemplation, love to tread
Earth's flow'ry carpet on the mountain's head;
Others, more humble, ſeek the humble vale
Where humble lovers tell their humble tale.
Peace to ſuch triflers---theſe are idle toys,
Fit themes enough to catch the mind of boys.

A vale's a vale, a hill is but a hill,
Let colouriſts adorn them as they will.
Peace to all ſuch---when nature ſhews her face
Radiant with nought but her own native grace,
How like a virgin doth ſhe charm the ſight,
And fill the ſenſe with rapturous delight!
But when vile bards, from coxcomb fancy's ſtore
Have trimm'd and dreſs'd her like a common whore,
The beauteous goddeſs is no longer known,
For art has chang'd each feature from her own.
Diſdaining this, be ours to range the heath,
And form a gay, knick-knackatory wreath;
A wreath, which he who once has learn'd to twine
May ſit, and ſnap his fingers at the *Nine*.

Of that vaſt tow'ring ornament of hair,
Which judges, council, and no council wear,
(Thro' which deceit oft blinks with artful eyes,
And grins in ſecret at the grave diſguiſe,
With which attornies dignify the face,
Grown up to devils imps, from babes of grace,
Deaf to the tender pleadings of diſtreſs,
Diſgraces to the ſtudy they profeſs,

Curs'd

Curs'd with ſlow cunning, and with ſly pretence,
Which they, like many fools, miſtake for ſenſe,
Who to themſelves each good fat cauſe reſerve,
And nobly feaſt on't, while their clients ſtarve,
Thoſe peſts, from whom unnumbred ills accrue
Who fix diſhonour on the WORTHY FEW)
I ſing undaunted, panting to explore
A path to Helicon unknown before.

Of that vaſt tow'ring ornament of hair,
Which real doctors, and quack-doctors wear,
(So ſmall the diff'rence, one can ſcarcely tell
Which of the two means either ill or well,
Since one to ſtated rules and forms a drone,
Blunders by ſtated rules and forms alone,
And t'other frees his patient from his pain,
Partly thro' ignorance, and hope of gain;
So ſmall the diff'rence, fools are nothing loth
Either to truſt, but wiſe men ſhun 'em both)
I ſing undaunted, panting to explore
A path to Helicon, unknown before.

Of that vaſt tow'ring ornament of hair,
Which lazy biſhops, and arch-biſhops wear,

That

That awful effort to their mount of fame,
That reverend badge, which all the clergy claim,
('Mongſt whom, of rectors multitudes we find
To their officiates ſo profuſely kind,
That from an income, ample as the ſoul
Of man can wiſh, ſo kind that from the whole
The annual ſum of thirty pounds they give,
To breathe on that, on which they cannot live)
I ſing undaunted, panting to explore
A path to Helicon, unknown before.

GENIUS! do thou aſſiſt my daring lay,
New robes put on to grace me on my way.
Oh! let me ſtart to light from fancy's flint,
Freſh as a new-coin'd ſixpence from the mint,
And let her ſparks, tho' ſparkling from a ſtone,
Kindle a torch to blaze me to renown.
Is this too much? then grant another aid,
Lend me thy laſt new wig my brows to ſhade,
To cover warm, imagination's ſhell,
And hatch the poem that will greatly---SELL.
Aſſiſt my emprize---elſe the letter'd band
Will ſigh, will ſob, will ſicken thro' the land.

See ſupplicating bards around thy ſhrine,
The choiceſt groupe, that ever turn'd a line!
The bard of love, with tears who wets his lays,
The bard of ſatire, and the bard of praiſe,
Folly's pert brat, the laughing child of fun,
The thing of rebus, and no thing of pun;
As well the builder of the lofty rhime,
As the corrector of acroſtic time,
As well the factor of a birthday ode,
As the twin rival of the Grubſtreet mode,
As well the wiſe heads of a wiſe review,
As the ſuperior riddle-making crew,
As well thoſe nice, thoſe *taſteful* kind of men,
Who from a ſilver ſtandiſh draw their pen,
As thoſe, who from an inkhorn write for hire,
And cook their dinner by the muſes fire.
All, all kneel ſupplicant around thy ſhrine,
And aſk the poem of the *Wig* divine.

By the ſage buckles of the lawyer's tye,
The foretop nodding o'er the biſhop's eye!
By that grave, ſolemn, formal buſh of hair,
Which *Galen* wore not, tho' his baſtards wear!

By that ſurpriſing grizzle bob, which they
Put on, to look unnaturally grey
Before their time! By that amazing wig
In which ſmall D------y appears ſo big,
And by the Tyburn top of modern make,
That ſo diſtinguiſhes the city rake!
By that white ſwelling of enormous paſte
Which Ludgate mercers wear, and think it taſte!
(Thoſe ſtiff-neck'd ſtatues, ſo preciſe and prim,
As if 'twas criminal to move a limb;
Thoſe male, thoſe female, thoſe ambiguous creatures,
With ſuch hermaphrodite, unmeaning features,
One knows not male, or female which to call,
They're both, they're either, and yet none at all)
By each large, pompous, ſcientifick lock,
That winds ſuch meaning round the head of Rock!
By the cork bob, that fits ſo ſnugg and tight,
Whoſe light formation wraps a head as light,
Worn by each jemmy of a country town,
To make him look more clever than the clown!
Let me conjure thee to aſſiſt my ſong
By theſe, and all the blocks to which theſe Wigs belong!

'Tis

'Tis done---and fancy now begins to roll,
Her bounding ſurges o'er my bounding ſoul,
And, as her tides impetuous pour along,
Each muſcle ſwells, and ev'ry nerve grows ſtrong,
My heart ſprings high, uplifted from its throne,
And aſks a body greater than my own.

Now frown, *ſir critic*, in your padded chair
Toſs back your foretop with a claſſic air.
Spit forth your foam, and call the ſubject low,
Ourſelf is proof againſt a vulgar foe.
Ourſelf can raiſe (for be it known we dare
As good, nay better wig than thine to wear)
Ourſelf can raiſe, in ſpite of critic laws,
Legions of ſhavers to ſupport our cauſe,
To join our party reſolutely warm,
And firm as barbers poles againſt a ſtorm.

O thou! whoſe fertile comprehenſive mind,
The graceful peruke daringly deſign'd,
(Whether thy ſoft, melodious ſpirit ſings,
On mount ſtar-crown'd, or dances round the rings
Of blithe *Titania*, queen of fairy land,
Tripping by moonlight with her antick band,

Or floats with wing muſk-dropping thro' the air,
For ever powder'd, and for ever fair,
Or with ſome ſweet ambroſial Naiad dreams,
Lull'd by the lapſe of wiſhy-waſhy ſtreams)
To thee men owe, thou ſon of ancient time,
The wig in proſe---to me the wig in rhime.
The hint once giv'n, 'tis eaſy to improve,
But he who gave it moſt deſerves our love.
Th' ingenious wight, who firſt the ruffle fram'd,
Ought ſure on public record to be nam'd.
Prior to him, who far enlarg'd the plan,
And gave the ſhirt, the wholeſome ſhirt to man;
For had that hint ne'er ſtarted into birth,
We ſtill had wander'd ſhirtleſs o'er the earth,
Engliſh and Scotchmen, whereſoe'er they are,
In this reſpect had been upon a par.

Why droops my brother learned in the law,
Expert to find out, or to make a flaw!
Why ſtands that ſurly ſcold abaſh'd with fear,
That ſtern dictator to a M----- ear,
Form'd with rare parts each cauſe to make or mar,
That leader, and that bully of the bar!

That

That croſs examiner, ſtudious to confound
An upright witneſs on the ſlighteſt ground!
That honeſt man, (none honeſter can be)
Who ne'er was known to take a double fee!
Think'ſt thou, my learned brother, that I mean
On thee to dart one arrow of my ſpleen!
Nay, prithee frown not thus, nor look ſo big,
I ſhall not hurt one corner of thy wig.
No---let me leave thee to thy ſordid views,
Thy name alone would blaſt my riſing muſe.

Now mark the contraſt---ſee PERITUS ſtand,
Holding the brief of freedom in his hand!
Whoſe rare, extenſive knowledge of the laws,
Leads him to turn the ſprings of ev'ry cauſe,
Who, not content with ſuperficial ſtore,
Drinks deep at learning's fount, and thirſts for more;
Whoſe worth, like gold enclos'd within the mine,
Long reſted, doom'd in its own ſphere to ſhine,
Whom faction cannot awe, nor lucre win---
Who loves this character, muſt honour GLYN.

Turn we aſide to yon ſlow, ſolemn prig,
Deck'd with a huge circumference of wig,

Curl above curl aſcending——
Who fills the Change with all that pomp and ſtate,
As if, like BERKLEY, he was *fix'd as fate*,
Who would not think, from his external pride,
That wealth to him roll'd down her golden tide;
And, that the wheels of credit ruſty grown,
Turn'd glibly forward by his means alone!
Deluding thought! for CIVIS whelm'd in debt,
Trembles each time at reading the Gazette:
But for the preſent ſwells into applauſe——
Aſk you the reaſon?---Why his wig's the cauſe.
Had it not been for this egregious ſhow,
Th' impoſtor would have fail'd ſome years ago.

In former days, when mortals wore their hair,
Or bare, were not aſham'd of being bare;
Then native eloquence in all ſhe ſaid,
Commanded awe without external aid;
Now flowing gentler than the gentle ſtream,
And now bewitching, like a fairy dream,
Now fiercely rapid like a whirlwind's breath,
And putting fraudful argument to death;
When law was law, and ſenſe was ſterling ſenſe,
Free from the baſe alloy of impudence,

And villains, when the voice of Truth they heard,
Stood mute, and ſhudder'd at her ſearching word.
But then alas! was no diſtinction known,
For heads of hair, the cottage and the throne
Equally mark'd, and view'd by vulgar eyes,
The fool ſometimes look'd wiſer than the wiſe.
This the great *Wig-wag* (for like other men
Who ſeek to gain due praiſes from their pen,
My deity I ſummon, knowing this,
Who write without, will always write amiſs)
This the great *Wig-wag* ſaw, and ſaw with pain,
For much the remedy perplex'd his brain.
Long time he mourn'd, in pity to mankind,
And thus pour'd forth the troubles of his mind.

" How long ſhall this equality remain!
" How long ſhall hair the hero and the ſwain
" Characterize alike! ſhall men be known
" And be diſtinguiſhed for their ſenſe alone!
" What! ſhall the poet gain immortal praiſe,
" Merely becauſe he moſt deſerves the bays!
" And, ſhall the lawyer reap the moſt applauſe,
" Merely becauſe he beſt expounds the laws!

Shall

" Shall he who ſav'd the ſubject of a town,
" No badge diſplay beſide the civic crown!
" Shall he, who dar'd his conqu'ring ſword unſheath,
" Be honour'd only with a lawrel wreath!
" Some means muſt be devis'd to give a grace,
" And ſtamp a conſequence upon the face;
" To fill each feature with majeſtic air,
" To ſtrike with awe, and make the rabble ſtare:
" Depriv'd of outward gravity, of courſe
" Half of fine arguments loſe half their force.
" This to prevent, my taſk is to prepare
" An ample *Something* from collected hair;
" What name to give this *thing* when brought to light,
" Lies deeply buried in the womb of night.
" But much I ween this *Something* when 'tis made,
" By due degrees will ſwell into a trade,
" And will not only human pates adorn,
" But feed the mouths of thouſands yet unborn."
So ſaying, to the earth he bow'd his head,
And for the ſake of thinking---went to bed.
Thus have I ſeen the man of thought profound,
Sit with his eyeballs fix'd upon the ground,
And, as the flood of ſentiment grew deep,
Nod for a while, and then fall faſt aſleep;

When

When, ſtarting from his temporary dream,
Wherein he ponder'd on his lofty theme,
The pen he'd ſeize, each mighty hint ſet down,
Print his work boldly, and alarm the town;
Which proves, beyond the ſhadow of a doubt,
Projectors firſt ſhould nap---then ſleep it out.

Now might I ſing the praiſes of the bed,
How much it ſtrengthens and improves the head;
What ſchemes are form'd for future action there,
How ſome ſucceed, and more diſſolve to air;
How mem'ry ſits a ſtraddle o'er the brain,
And backward rides at large without a rein,
The ſports of childhood fondly muſing o'er,
Regretting that thoſe pleaſures are no more,
When all was mirth, or if a tear but fell,
'Twas quickly wip'd away, and all was well;
When 'twas his ſole and principal concern,
To mind one maſter, and his taſk to learn;
That done, t' indulge the remnant of the day,
To put his little cap on, and to play,
When with new fancies he'd his time beguile,
And e'en a farthing whiſtle made him ſmile;

When ſleep unaſk'd prepar'd his eaſy bed,
Nor brought her horrid dreams to vex his head,
Reſerving thoſe the foremoſt in her van,
To plague that guilty monſter call'd a MAN---
---But this would prove a hiſtory too ſad,
Fatigue each bard, and make each critic mad.
Day roll'd on day, and night ſucceeded night,
Whole years had wing'd their everlaſting flight,
E'er *Wigwag*'s vaſt mechanic ſtretch of thought,
This wondrous wonder to perfection brought.
Mean while, earth's kings to death reſigned their pride,
Stateſmen and coblers, wits and dunces died;
The knave, the fool, the coward, and the bold,
Shar'd the ſame fate, and *Time* himſelf caught cold,
As well he might, when one poor lock of hair
Was all he had, to ſhield a pate ſo bare.
At length 'twas finiſh'd, and the race of man
As if inſpir'd, ſeem'd conſcious of the plan.
All nature ſmil'd---but not on earth alone,
Joy reach'd the ſkies, joy fill'd Olympus' throne.
With quicker ſpirits, and with brighter ray,
Phœbus aroſe, and burniſh'd up the day.
Cynthia too, ſhining with uncommon light,
Wrapt her beſt mantle round the waiſt of night.

'Twixt

'Twixt Jove and Juno, all things were appeas'd,
For Jove and Juno both alike were pleas'd.
Nay Pallas ſmil'd, for Pallas lov'd the whim,
And Vulcan caper'd with his broken limb.
Gay Venus chuckl'd when the news was brought,
And Mars ſwore--"damn him" 'twas a lucky thought;
So pleas'd theſe laſt, that from the reſt they broke,
Retir'd in private, and enjoy'd the joke.
That pleaſing feaſt of fancy being done,
Thus ſpoke the godhead with an air of fun.
" O queen of charms! now plainly do I ſee,
" That artful *Wigwag* ſtole his hint from thee.
" He ſaw thee bathing in the Paphian grove,
" And plan'd his wig from thy fair feat of love.
" Then ſtrok'd thoſe locks he oft had ſtrok'd before---
" This is a beauteous lock of hair, he ſwore,
" And this---and this---nay all theſe locks were meant
" By gen'rous nature, for ſome good intent.
" This golden one, methinks, was form'd ſo rare
" For none but the L—— C—— to wear.
" How well this ringlet would become his brow!
" But red they ſay is not the faſhion now:
" And yet ſo fond is he of this ſame wig,
" I'm told for colour he ne'er car'd a fig;

However

" However ample, or however ſmall,
" And if *unfurniſh'd*, he'd put on the *cawl*.

Now dire commotions and debates aroſe,
So fierce, their godſhips almoſt went to blows.
Rehearſe O muſe! the great, important cauſe,
Be brief, and tell us what the quarrel was.
What more than this---"*What name a thing ſo rare*
(So likely to become the mode) ſhould bear."
Diſputes ran high, when *Momus* interpos'd,
Settled the queſtion, and the hubbub clos'd.
" Suppoſe, ſaid he, to raiſe the maker's fame,
" This *thing* retains one half the maker's name.
" Call it the *Wig*---the *Wig* they all reply,
And Eccho thro' the chambers of the ſky
Return'd the ſound---then peace reſum'd her reign,
And, Silence beckoning, all was huſh'd again.
So at ſome public meeting have I ſeen,
When argument has turn'd into chagrine,
When ev'ry word has tended to provoke,
And the rude fiſt been ready for a ſtroke,
Some *Wag* ſtart up, and with harmonious lay,
Chace ev'ry feud, and ev'ry frown away.

Now

Now, to ſecure the praiſes he had gain'd,
An ample taſk for *Wigwag* yet remain'd.
Is it enough to ſcale the tow'r of fame!
No---to maintain it and be ſtill the ſame.
To vault at once to reputation's ſeat---
Is that ſo hard! no---to be truly great,
To rule the reins with abſolute command
Requires the guidance of a maſter's hand.
A different conduct certain ſhame will bring,
And brand a ſubject much, but more a king.
'Twas *Wigwag*'s taſk to end what was begun,
For well he knew there were more heads than one.
The gutling alderman, my lord the mayor,
The mimic ſtateſman, and the mimic player,
The man of poverty, the man of treaſure,
The man of bus'neſs, and the man of pleaſure,
The rogue, the fool, the blockhead, and the wit,
All theſe, and thouſands more, he had to fit.

Each morning, e'er the lark was heard to ſing,
Or ſeen to ſoar adventurous of wing,
E'er yet the ſun's all-chearing eye of light
Diſpell'd the ſolemn languor of the night,

E'er yet the ſhepherd in his cot of thatch,
Crept to the door, and lifted up the latch,
Call'd by the cock, prime herald of the day,
" He roſe to work, as if he roſe to play,"
Labouring till night, when ſleep without ſurprize
Tenderly wrapt her fillet o'er his eyes.
O gentle ſleep! with ev'ry bleſſing fraught,
Thou kind indulgent nurſe of infant thought!
Reſtorer of each weak diſtemper'd brain,
Labour's ſoft cradle, and the grave of pain!
Without thy ſweet, nocturnal balmy cure,
The taſk of life what Being could endure!
Without thee, ſoon the roſe of health would fade,
Love's ſhining eye would languiſh into ſhade,
And Reaſon ſicken, till delirious grown,
She tumbl'd in convulſions from her throne.

At length with conſtant pow'r of manual pains,
Join'd to a more than modern pow'r of brains,
Our engineer completed all his plan,
To grace as well the ſtripling as the man.
Fame blew her clarionet, and at the ſound
Inſtant the ſons of earth conven'd around.

High

High on a chair, which ſome a throne would call,
Our hero ſat and over-look'd 'em all.
Not with more ſolemn dignity of face
The maſter-maſon takes his noble place,
Like him, he held a hammer in his hand,
To bid the tongue lie mute at his command.
On proper blocks arrang'd on either ſide,
His manufactury he view'd with pride,
As conſcious that ſome future bard would breathe,
And to his fame entwine a laſting wreath.
Before him, curious emblems of his trade,
In curious order, curiouſly were laid.
A finiſh'd maſterpiece of art he wore,
Type of deep ſkill, that manifeſtly bore
The ſtamp of knowledge, hiding ev'ry fault
(If fault there was) with ſeeming depth of thought;
Such a choice *wig*, none ſince preſume to own,
Or claim its right, but C--------s alone,
Whoſe form ſo lately grac'd a HARDWICK's brow,
But beams leſs grace on ſneering ——— now,
Tho' comb'd and powder'd with peculiar care,
All muſt confeſs 'tis ſomewhat worſe for wear;
But ſtill ſo much the *tare*, ſo ſmall the *nett*,
We can't in juſtice but allow the *trett*.

Silence

Silence proclaim'd, he roſe and gravely bow'd---
Then thus addreſs'd the many headed crowd.
" Mortals! whate'er your rank, whate'er your name,
" Fond of your perſons, fonder ſtill of fame,
" See with what labour and what art are made,
" Perukes adapted each to ev'ry trade,
" Ev'ry profeſſion. Hence the man of law
" Shall quote the preſident he never ſaw,
" And gain the hearer's credit. Hence with head
" (Tho' it may look a lump of living lead)
" Replete with quirks his fortune he ſhall raiſe,
" And ſhine the perfect *Carteret* of his days;
" What's more, perhaps his ſervice to requite,
" Like him and *Fielding*, may be made a knight.
" Hence the young pulpiteer grown old in ſin,
" With outward veil ſhall cloak his crimes within;
" The ſtings of vice in boldeſt colours paint
" With all the ſeeming virtues of a ſaint,
" With ſuch ſucceſs, his audience ſhall incline
" To think him, like his doctrine, all divine.
" Hence too (if I can prophecy aright)
" Shall dull phyſicians dull preſcriptions write,
" And ſelf-ſufficient *Akenſide* ſhall dare,
" His ſkill with that of *Schomberg*'s to compare.

But

" But oh vain thought! with equal impudence
" May coxcomb Folly vie with ſterling Senſe.
" And now let each according to his views
" In life, a decent proper peruke chuſe:
" But take eſpecial note ye touch not *that*,
" For *that* I made on purpoſe for a PRATT.
" Rich the materials, and each ſingle hair
" Wove with the niceſt nicety of care.
" Enwrapt in this, ſhall he with graceful eaſe
" Sit and adorn the court of Common Pleas,
" To foul corruption ſhall diſdain to yield,
" And round fair Freedom throw an ample ſhield,
" Protective of her rights---tho' arm'd with force,
" And miniſterial rage, to check his courſe
" Stern OPPOSITION ſtalk with dreadful port,
" In league with all the hellhounds of a court,
" Yet ſhall he keep his patriot ſtrength of ſoul,
" And riſe above the baſeneſs of controul.
" Spite of revenge, in proud Oppreſſion's ſpite,
" While Conſcience bears conviction that he's right.

He paus'd---and each as various fancy led,
With rapture choſe a covering for his head.

Then with a ſhout they hail'd the founder's name,
Departing, in conceit, much wiſer than they came.

But now, oh racking thought! oh death to name!
Like yon old *wig*, all rufflʼd is my frame.
And hark! the goſſip winds inform the world
My ſoul grows lank, and ev'ry thought's uncurl'd.
Oh! I could leap from off this vital ſtage,
And puff my ſoul out in a cloud of rage.
The day is near, that inauſpicious day,
When *Wigwag*'s blaze of glory muſt decay;
For ſee the riſing age preſume to wear,
In various taſte, their various heads of hair.
Some ſops in dangling flip-flap locks appear,
Wiſely contriv'd to hide an aſs's ear.
Others high over-head their ringlets raiſe
"And torture one poor hair a thouſand ways,"
Dupes to falſe taſte, and ſtudiouſly intent
To force a curl that nature never meant;
But moſt thoſe trifling inſects of a day,
Who, juſt as atoms in the ſun-beams play,
Their martial inſignificance expoſe,
And ſhew the ſoldier only in their cloathes.

Well

Well---of all prigs whom faſhion ever bred,
The moſt diſguſtful is the prig in red.
Ah---what a ſight!---a ſciſſar-armed band
Of motly dreſſers ſwarm throughout the land.
Reſolv'd that perukes ſhall no longer grace
The Temples, and give honour to the face,
They frown defiance, and they ſcorn to yield,
All ſworn to die, or conquer in the field.

Ye ſons of Art! who weave the flowing curl,
And the ſilk foldings of the cawl unfurl,
(To whoſe rare ſkill for all the wealth they get,
The lawyer and phyſician are in debt,
To whom divines, the graveſt of the grave,
Are bound as much for all the praiſe they have)
Ariſe---be vigorous in your own defence,
Maintain your title to pre-eminence.
Ariſe---and to the fight undaunted go,
Nor doubt a glorious conqueſt o'er the foe.
Ariſe---(and may the mighty voice I hear
Of *Wigwag* ſounding from yon azure ſphere,
As downward thro' the vault of air it rolls,
Strike on your nerves, and ſwell your daring ſouls)

Ariſe

Ariſe---exert your fortitude of heart,
And ſhew that Nature muſt ſubmit to Art.
Then ſhall the bard record each champion's name,
And in bold ſtrains his epic poem frame,
In ſuch bold ſtrains, that trunkmakers ſhall ſee
No modern author more abus'd than Me.

FINIS.